

## Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDON DERRY

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U. K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: RESPONDING TO NI ELECTION RESULTS: AN ANALYSIS

FOLLOWING TRANSMITTED BY CONSULATE GENERAL BELFAST:

BEGIN SUMMARY: THERE IS NO BLINKING AT FACT THAT IN FEB 28 GENERAL ELECTION NI PROTESTANTS, INCLUDING MANY MODERATES, REJECTED GRANTING OF EXECUTIVE POWERS TO COUNCIL OF IRELAND, AND MORE GENERALLY PROTESTED AGAINST WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS ENDLESS SERIES OF ONE-SIDED UNIONIST CONCESSIONS WHICH HAVE NOT ENDED REPUBLICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE OR STRENGTHENED NI'S POSITION WITHIN UK. THESE VOTERS ARE DISGUSTED WITH PERFORMANCE OF DUBLIN GOVERNMENT ON STATUS AND SECURITY MATTERS, AND WITH FAULKNER'S ATTEMPTS TO PORTRAY SUNNINGDALE AS IF IT WERE ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH PAST UNIONIST POLICIES. THEY SEE COUNCIL OF IRELAND AS FRAMEWORK IN WHICH BRITISH AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS AND SDLP COULD PRESSURE UNIONISTS INTO MORE CONCESSIONS, FURTHER ERODING POSITION WITHIN UK AND LEADING EVENTUALLY TO UNITED IRELAND. WHILE NEWLY-ELECTED UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST MPS HAVE EXPLOITED ULSTER PROTESTANT FEARS IN WAYS INIMICAL

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TO BRITISH POLICY IN NI, THEY ARE POLITICIANS, NOT

TERRORISTS. BENEATH THEIR RHETORIC ABOUT "RENEGOTIATION" OF CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS THEIR ACTUAL DEMANDS ARE NOT OUTRAGEOUS OR EVEN INCONSISTENT WITH CONSTITUTION ACT. POLITICAL SOLUTION FOR NI REQUIRES CONSENT NOT ONLY OF BRITISH AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS BUT ALSO OF NI PEOPLE, AND IT IS CLEAR THEY DO NOT CONSENT TO EXECUTIVE POWERS FOR COUNCIL OF IRELAND. WHATEVER POLITICAL WAY FORWARD WILL REQUIRE, LOYALISTS WILL AT LEAST INSIST ON REMOVAL OF SUCH POWERS FROM COI, NEW ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, RECONSTITUTION OF EXECUTIVE AND SERIOUS ATTENTION TO THEIR DEMANDS RE REPRESENTATION AT WESTMINSTER AND STRONGER REGIONAL GOVERNMENT. WHILE FAULKNERITES AND SDLP PROFESS TO BE ABLE TO SOLDIER ON WITH PRESENT SUNNINGDALE SUBJECT ONLY TO "UNLESS AND UNTIL DUBLIN DELIVERS," PRESSURES FOR MODIFICATION SEEM LIKELY TO PREVAIL. FAULKNERITES WOULD BE RELIEVED SOMEWHAT BY THIS. GIVEN ITS STRING OF SUCCESSES OVER PAST YEAR AND A LITTLE HELP FROM HMG ON DETENTION, EMERGENCY POWERS, ADMISSION TO POLITICAL LIFE OF SINN FEIN AND HUMAN RIGHTS, SDLP COULD AFFORD TO GO ALONG WITH COI WITH DIMINISHED ROLE IN LONGER-RANGE TIME FRAME. PERHAPS MOST DISCOMFITED BY RECENT LOYALIST ELECTORAL SUCCESS WILL PROVE TO BE DUBLIN. IF IT HOPES TO GET WHAT IT SAYS IT WANTS, IT NOW CLEARLY MUST TAKE POLITICAL STEPS HERETOFORE FOUND TOO DIFFICULT TO UNDERTAKE. END SUMMARY.

1). THERE IS NO BLINKING AT FACT THAT UNITED ULSTER UNIONISTS SCORED EXTRAORDINARY VICTORY IN FEBRUARY 28 GENERAL ELECTION. THEY WON 11 OF 12 SEATS AND TOOK OVER HALF OF TOTAL VALID VOTE, INCLUDING MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF PROTESTANT VOTE. THERE WAS A SWING OF MORE THAN 15 PER CENT TO THEM IN EIGHT MONTHS SINCE NI ASSEMBLY ELECTION, A MAJOR CHANGE BY ANY STANDARDS.

2. PRINCIPAL FACTOR IN LOYALIST VICTORY WAS SUCCESSFUL EXPLOITATION OF PROTESTANT FEARS THAT COUNCIL OF IRELAND WAS ONLY FIRST STEP TOWARD UNITED IRELAND. ALTHOUGH LOYALISTS GENERALLY CONDEMNED ENTIRE CONSTITUTION ACT AND POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRINCIPAL THRUST OF THEIR CAMPAIGN WAS AGAINST COUNCIL OF IRELAND WITH EXECUTIVE POWERS. PRO-ASSEMBLY UNIONIST, ALLIANCE AND NORTHERN IRELAND LABOUR CANDIDATES WERE PUBLICLY SO SKEPTICAL ABOUT DUBLIN GOVERNMENT'S GOOD FAITH, ONE HESITATES EVEN TO CALL VOTE FOR THEM A "PRO-SUNNINGDALE" VOTE.

3. LOYALIST SUPPORT STRETCHED FAR BEYOND ADVOCATES OF PROTESTANT ASCENDANCY INTO RANKS OF LIBERAL UNIONISTS

WHO IN PAST SUPPORTED TERENCE O'NEILL AND WHO NOW  
BACK CONSTITUTION ACT, POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE AND  
GOOD RELATIONS WITH IRISH REPUBLIC. THESE VOTERS  
BACKED LOYALIST CANDIDATES AS PROTEST AGAINST WHAT

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THEY SAW AS ENDLESS SERIES OF ONE-SIDED UNIONIST  
CONCESSIONS TO NORTHERN CATHOLICS AND IRISH GOVERNMENT  
UNDER PRESSURE FROM BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND WITH, AS  
THEY SAW IT, CONNIVANCE OF SOME UNIONIST LEADERS.

4. MOST PROTESTANTS ARE PARTICULARLY DISGUSTED BY  
IRISH GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD STATUS OF NI AND  
SELF-DETERMINATION RIGHTS OF ITS PEOPLE. THEY NEVER  
HAVE SERIOUSLY BELIEVED DUBLIN GOVERNMENT MEANS TO TAKE  
OVER NORTH, BUT CONSTITUTIONAL TERRITORIAL CLAIM STANDS  
AS SYMBOLIC INSULT TO THEM. IF DUBLIN IS SERIOUS ABOUT  
RECONCILIATION OF TWO TRADITIONS AND UNITY ONLY BY  
CONSENT, THEY SAY, TERRITORIAL CLAIM MUST BE  
ABANDONED. IF DUBLIN GOVERNMENT WILL NOT HOLD

REFERENDUM ON TERRITORIAL CLAIM FOR FEAR IRISH PEOPLE  
WOULD REJECT IT, THEN THAT SIMPLY PROVES THAT IRISH  
PEOPLE ARE NOT WILLING TO MAKE ANY SACRIFICES  
COMPARABLE TO THOSE REQUIRED OF UNIONISTS TO ACHIEVE  
PEACE IN IRELAND, AND THAT IRISH GOVERNMENT IS  
UNWILLING TO TAKE POLITICAL RISKS COMPARABLE TO THOSE  
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WHICH HAVE BROUGHT DOWN SUCCESSIVE UNIONIST LEADERS.

FUGITIVE OFFENDERS, IS EQUALLY REPUGNANT TO PROTESTANTS.  
THEY CONSIDER THAT OBLIGATION TO PREVENT IRISH TERRITORY  
FROM BEING USED AS BASE, SUPPLY LINE OR SANCTUARY FOR  
TERRORISTS IS ONE ALREADY IMPOSED BY INTERNATIONAL LAW  
AND MORALITY, AND NEED NOT BE PURCHASED BY FURTHER  
CONCESSIONS. DUBLIN'S RELUCTANCE TO ADAPT EXTRADITION  
LAWS TO COVER POLITICAL TERRORISTS IS SEEN AS  
REFLECTION OF INDULGENT IRISH ATTITUDE TOWARD POLITICAL  
VIOLENCE AND LACK OF POLITICAL WILL TO MAKE SACRIFICES  
TO ACHIEVE RECONCILIATION.

6. LARGE LOYALIST VOTE ALSO REPRESENTED REJECTION OF  
BRIAN FAULKNER. CONCESSIONS HE MADE AT SUNNINGDALE  
AND HIS EFFORTS TO PORTRAY IT (AS HE DID ALSO  
THE WHITE PAPER AND THE CONSTITUTION ACT) AS NOTHING  
MORE THAN LOGICAL ELABORATION OF PAST UNIONIST  
MANIFESTOS, HAVE VIRTUALLY EXHAUSTED LARGE FUND OF  
CREDIBILITY AMONG ORTHODOX UNIONISTS WHICH WAS  
PRINCIPAL POLITICAL ASSET HE BROUGHT TO  
EXECUTIVE.

7. ALTHOUGH SUNNINGDALE CONCEPT OF COUNCIL OF IRELAND,  
ON ITS FACE, OFFERS SUFFICIENT SAFEGUARDS FOR UNIONIST  
INTERESTS, VERY MANY ULSTER PROTESTANTS LOOK AT IT NOT  
ONLY AS ANOTHER IN SERIES OF ONE-SIDES CONCESSIONS  
INDICATED ABOVE, BUT ALSO AS FRAMEWORK IN WHICH FUTURE  
UNIONIST LEADERS CAN BE PRESSURED INTO STILL FURTHER  
CONCESSIONS AGAINST ESSENTIAL UNIONIST INTEREST. THERE  
IS LINKAGE BETWEEN CONSTITUTION ACT, POWER-SHARING  
EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL OF IRELAND: CONSTITUTION ACT  
IMPLICITLY REQUIRES ESTABLISHMENT OF POWER-SHARING  
EXECUTIVE AS CONDITION FOR DEVOLUTION OF POWER TO  
REGIONAL LEVEL, WHICH GAVE SDLP DE FACTO VETO ON WHETHER  
HMG WOULD DEVOLVE POWER; SDLP MADE COUNCIL OF IRELAND  
AND MOVEMENT ON INTERNMENT AND POLICE CONDITIONS OF ITS  
PARTICIPATION IN EXECUTIVE; HMG THEN CALLED SUNNINGDALE  
CONFERENCE WHICH DEALT WITH THESE MATTERS (BUT  
DISHONORED HMG WHITE PAPER COMMITMENT TO ALLOW ALL  
LEADERS OF NI OPINION TO PARTICIPATE FULLY); FAULKNER  
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HAD THEN TO AGREE TO SDLP-DUBLIN DEMAND FOR COUNCIL OF IRELAND WITH EXECUTIVE POWERS IN ORDER TO BRING EXECUTIVE INTO BEING. THUS IN FUTURE, IT IS ARGUED, COUNCIL OF IRELAND AND NI SECRETARY OF STATE'S POWERS OVER EXECUTIVE WILL BE USED AGAIN TO FORCE UNIONISTS NOT TO USE VETO AGAINST EXTENSION OF POWERS OF COUNCIL OF IRELAND AND EVENTUAL IRISH UNITY.

8. IT IS TRUE THAT NEWLY-ELECTED LOYALIST M.P.S HAVE MUCH TO ANSWER FOR FOR EXPLOITING PROTESTANT FEARS. MOREOVER, THEIR ESTRANGEMENT FROM NI POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IS PARTLY THEIR OWN FAULT, SINCE THEY REFUSED TO TAKE PART IN EXECUTIVE TALKS IN AUTUMN 1973 WITH FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE WHITELAW. THEIR RHETORIC ABOUT "RENEGOTIATION" OF CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, WHICH ARE SUPPORTED BY ALL THE MAJOR BRITISH POLITICAL PARTIES, MUST SEEM BOTH ABSURD AND PROVOCATIVE AT WESTMINSTER. NEVERTHELESS, ONE SHOULD NOT ACCEPT UNCRITICALLY THE CARICATURES OF LOYALISTS PUT OUT BY THEIR POLITICAL OPPONENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE THESE CRITICS ARE FOND OF PORTRAYING LOYALISTS AS SUPPORTERS OF A UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF

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INDEPENDENCE, LOYALIST CAMPAIGN WAS FOUGHT ON CONTINUED UNION WITH BRITAIN. THEY, LIKE ALMOST ALL PROTESTANTS, WOULD ACCEPT AN INDEPENDENT ULSTER ONLY AS A LAST-RESORT ALTERNATIVE TO A UNITED IRELAND. CRITICS HAVE CHARACTERIZED LOYALISTS AS VIOLENCE-PRONE, BUT THEY HAVE SAID THEY WOULD FIGHT ONLY TO REMAIN BRITISH OR TO STAY OUT OF A UNITED IRELAND. THEY HAVE GENERALLY CONDEMNED POLITICAL VIOLENCE FROM WHATEVER SOURCE IN THE CURRENT SITUATION, AND ALL EVIDENCE HERE INDICATES THEY ARE RIVALS OF PROTESTANT PARAMILITARY ELEMENTS, NOT THEIR ALLIES, IN SEEKING LEADERSHIP OF LOYALIST POPULATION. WHILE LOYALISTS HAVE MADE SWEEPING CALL FOR RENEGOTIATION OF NI'S CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, THEIR SPECIFIC PROGRAM CALLS FOR FULL PARITY IN REPRESENTATION AT WESTMINSTER, DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED REGIONAL GOVERNMENT WITH INTERNAL SECURITY POWERS AND NO ALL-IRELAND INSTITUTIONS WITH EXECUTIVE POWERS -- NOT ON FACE OF IT OUTRAGEOUS DEMANDS, AND NOT EVEN INCONSISTENT WITH CONSTITUTION ACT.

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9. WHILE CONTINUED WESTMINSTER AND IRISH REPUBLIC SUPPORT FOR NI CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS ARE OBVIOUSLY ESSENTIAL TO POLITICAL SOLUTION FOR NI, IT IS ALSO NECESSARY THAT NI POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE CONSENT OF MAJORITY OF NI PEOPLE. INDEED, THIS PRINCIPLE IS RECOGNIZED BOTH IN NI CONSTITUTION ACT AND IN SUNNINGDALE COMMUNIQUE. IN ONLY DEMOCRATIC FORUM WHICH HAS BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO THEM, NI PEOPLE IN FEBRUARY 28 GENERAL ELECTION REJECTED, IN PARTICULAR, GRANTING OF EXECUTIVE POWERS TO COUNCIL OF IRELAND AND, MORE GENERALLY, WHAT THEY REGARD AS ENDLESS SERIES OF ONE-SIDED UNIONIST CONCESSIONS WHICH HAVE NOT ENDED POLITICAL VIOLENCE OR STRENGTHENED NI'S POSITION WITHIN UK. SOME (E.G. SDLP) HERE SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT FEBRUARY 28 VOTE SHOULD BE DISREGARDED, THAT SUNNINGDALE PARTIES SHOULD PROCEED TO FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL PROVISIONS OF AGREEMENT AND THAT ULSTER PROTESTANTS WOULD COME IN TIME TO ACCEPT COUNCIL OF IRELAND AS THEY HAVE DONE WITH POWER-SHARING

EXECUTIVE. BUT THIS VIEW FAILS TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF PRESENT PROTESTANT/LOYALIST ATTITUDES. POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE WAS AFTER ALL ENDORSED BY ULSTER UNIONIST COUNCIL EVEN BEFORE IT WAS ANNOUNCED; AND, WHATEVER HAPPENED IN PRACTICE, ULSTER PROTESTANTS HAVE NEVER OPPOSED IN PRINCIPLE POWER-SHARING WITH CATHOLICS WHO ACCEPT NI'S CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION WITHIN UK (THEY ARE DIVIDED ON WHETHER SDLP FILLS THIS BILL). BUT SUNNINGDALE-TYPE COUNCIL OF IRELAND HAS ALREADY BEEN REJECTED BY UUC ON FEBRUARY 4 AND BY ELECTORATE ON FEBRUARY 28, AND LORD O'NEILL OF THE MAINE AND OTHER LIBERAL UNIONISTS NOW WARN THAT PRESSING AHEAD WITH IT IS LIKELY TO UNDERMINE PROGRESS ALREADY MADE IN ACCEPTANCE OF POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE. ATTEMPTS TO IGNORE SIGNIFICANCE OF ELECTION RESULTS OR TO PRESS AHEAD REGARDLESS TOWARD FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF SUNNINGDALE WOULD FURTHER UNDERMINE NI PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR NEW POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS. EQUALLY IMPORTANT, EITHER COURSE WOULD INCREASE PROPENSITY OF PROTESTANT/LOYALISTS TO TURN TO VIOLENCE RATHER THAN POLITICAL APPROACH BEING PURSUED BY UNITED ULSTER UNIONISTS.

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10. PROCEED-WITH-SUNNINGDALE-AS-IF-NOTHING-HAD-HAPPENED APPROACH IS OUT, AS FOREGOING ATTEMPTS TO PROVE. JUST AS STERILE WOULD BE EXTREME LOYALISTS' SCRAP-SUNNINGDALE-AND-CONSTITUTION-ACT-AND-START-ALL-OVER IDEA, AS FAULKNER DEMONSTRATED IN MARCH 19 DEBATE (BELFAST 32). SOME MODIFICATION OF SUNNINGDALE SEEMS INDICATED.

11. LOYALISTS HAVE NOT YET CLEARLY DEFINED WHAT CHANGES IN SUNNINGDALE SYSTEM THEY BELIEVE THEIR RECENT ELECTORAL SUCCESS CAN JUSTIFY. IT SEEMS, HOWEVER, THAT BONE IN THEIR THROAT IS GRANTING OF EXECUTIVE POWERS TO COUNCIL OF IRELAND AND NOT POWER-SHARING PER SE. SEVERAL LOYALIST LUMINARIES HAVE ALREADY INDICATED THAT POWER-SHARING ARRANGEMENTS THEMSELVES WILL BE ACCEPTABLE, I.E. AUSTIN ARDILL, PUBLICLY, AND JOHN LAIRD, PRIVATELY. MAIN REQUIREMENT WOULD THEREFORE APPEAR TO BE MODIFICATION OF THE COUNCIL OF IRELAND TO ELIMINATE PRESENTLY-CONTEMPLATED EXECUTIVE POWERS OR AT LEAST TO POSTPONE THEIR TRANSFER TO COUNCIL, NEW ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, SOME CHANGES IN EXECUTIVE, AND INDICATION THAT OTHER ELEMENTS OF

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LOYALIST PROGRAM ARE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. FOR EXAMPLE, DEMAND FOR INCREASED REPRESENTATION AT WESTMINSTER COULD BE REFERRED TO SPEAKERS COMMITTEE AND DEVOLUTION OF GREATER POWERS TO NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COULD BE INCLUDED IN STUDY OF GENERAL PROBLEM OF DEVOLUTION TO REGIONAL ASSEMBLIES IN OTHER PARTS OF UNITED KINGDOM.

12. FOR THE MOMENT, FAULKNER AND HIS SUPPORTERS ARE STONE-WALLING ON THE POSITION THAT AS-IS SUNNINGDALE IS STILL AN ACCEPTABLE WAY FORWARD AND THAT LOYALISTS CAN BE PERSUADED THAT PRO-ASSEMBLY UNIONISTS WILL PROTECT THEIR INTERESTS BY ASSURING THAT THERE WILL BE NO COUNCIL OF IRELAND UNLESS AND UNTIL DUBLIN DELIVERS ON ITS PRESENT COMMITMENTS. THIS POSITION HAS ADVANTAGE OF KEEPING SDLP'S COMMITMENT TO SUNNINGDALE INTACT BUT DISADVANTAGE OF PROBABLY NOT BEING SALEABLE TO LOYALISTS. IMPORTANT DEFECTIONS IN FAULKNER SUPPORT ARE ALREADY APPARENT NOT ONLY IN PETER MCLACHLAN (BELFAST 34) BUT ALSO ON PART OF ROY BRADFORD, WHO HAS ALREADY CONCEDED SOME "RENEGOTIATION" OF SUNNINGDALE IS NECESSARY,  
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AND LORD BROOKEBOROUGH.

13. SDLP SPOKESMEN (E.G. GERRY FITT AND JOHN HUME) STILL HEW TO LINE THAT COMPONENTS OF SUNNINGDALE HANG TOGETHER AND FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT ONE MEANS FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT ALL. BUT PRESSURE HERE IS NOW ON SDLP. NOT ONLY IN LOYALIST VIEW IS IT SDLP'S TURN TO GIVE UP SOMETHING, BUT ALSO IT IS CLEARLY DEMONSTRABLE THAT SDLP HAS HAD YEAR-LONG SERIES OF UNINTERRUPTED POLITICAL SUCCESSES. UNLESS SDLP IS WILLING TO APPEAR TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLAPSE OF SUNNINGDALE AND POWER-SHARING ALTOGETHER, IT WOULD SEEM THAT PARTY COULD AGREE TO A COUNCIL OF IRELAND WATERED DOWN SUFFICIENTLY TO ENGAGE LOYALISTS IF HMG AT SAME TIME WOULD PROTECT PARTY'S REPUBLICAN FLANK BY MORE RAPID RELEASE OF DETAINEES, LEGALISING POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF SINN FEIN, ABOLITION OR DIMINUTION OF EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT POWERS AND MORE RAPID ACTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS. ALSO RELEVANT TO SDLP'S STRENGTH AT MOMENT IS ABSOLUTELY FIRST-CLASS PERFORMANCE OF PARTY'S REPRESENTATIVES ON EXECUTIVE; AS ONE KNOWLEDGEABLE COMMENTATOR HERE PUT IT, "MOST COMPETENT MINISTERS EVER TO SIT AROUND A STORMONT CABINET TABLE."

14. MEANTIME MANY NORTHERN EYES ARE ALSO ON DUBLIN TO SEE IF IT TOO SEES LESSON FOR IT OF FEBRUARY 28 ELECTION RESULT: BACK TO DRAWING BOARD, EXPECT LESS, DO MORE.

SOHM

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